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AUTHOR Melady, Mary
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ABSTRACT

Counseling Learning/Community Language Learning (CL/CLL) is a pedagogical methodology developed out of research that was designed to study the psychological dynamics involved in adult learning. This paper is the result both of research and of personal experience with Counseling-Learning methodology applied to the field of teaching English as a second language. The aim of the paper is threefold: (1) to briefly explain Charles Curran's Counseling-Learning principles and methodology, (2) to present recent pedagogical support for such an approach, and (3) to show how Counseling-Learning can be integrated into a secondary school ESOL curriculum. The three main counseling techniques used for this methodology are: emphasis on client-counselor relationship, group counseling dynamics, and a period of reflection or evaluation in which the students' reactions and attitudes to the learning situation are investigated. The learning activity is simply that the student-clients engage in free conversation among themselves in the target language with the assistance of the language counselors. Recent pedagogical trends in foreign language education support both the interpersonal communication goal and the humanistic approach of CL/CLL. Five problems connected with CL/CLL in a secondary school ESOL program are discussed, and it is concluded that in this setting CL/CLL would be best utilized when teamed with other more conventional pedagogical techniques and methods. (Author/NCR)

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AN INVESTIGATION OF COUNSELING LEARNING/COMMUNITY LANGUAGE LEARNING--M. Melady

Preface

A few years ago when I was a senior in college, a friend of mine asked if I would speak to her occasionally in French because she wanted to practice French as much as possible. I was a French major and was naturally pleased for an opportunity to use that language.

The next time I saw my friend, I addressed her in French and she responded rapidly and fluently in the language. As we talked I asked her how long she had been studying French. She responded that she had been learning French for only three months in sessions that were held one evening per week for three hours. She went on to explain that she had had only two French courses in college a few years previously but had never had any real liking for foreign language courses and had never had enough ability or self-confidence to speak the language outside of a classroom situation. I found it almost unbelievable that someone with such little exposure to French could converse so fluently in it.

My friend explained further that she was doing some graduate study at Loyola University in Guidance and Counseling and that she was learning French as part of an on-going experiment there. One of the professors in the Counseling Department, Dr. Charles Curran, was doing extensive research on the application of counseling skills to learning situations.

It was obvious that there was something worthwhile about this research if the accomplishments of this student were at all indicative of the progress the students in the research group were making in mastering French. I wanted to observe some of the sessions but this was not possible. Since the sessions were part of a research project, no visitors were allowed to observe them to prevent any change in the experimental situation. So my knowledge of the Curran methodology consisted only of my friend's explanation of it.

I heard nothing more about "the Curran techniques" until last spring in a Seminar in TESOL at Northeastern Illinois University. One of Curran's close associates, Dr. Jenny Rardin, was a guest speaker in a seminar session. She explained this counseling methodology and some of the rationale behind it and concluded the session by giving a demonstration in which four students carried on a short conversation in French with her help.

During this past year I have learned a lot more about the Counseling-Learning Methodology. I have read several books and articles on the subject but most importantly I had an opportunity to learn the method first hand. As part of the course work for Experiential Preparation for TESOL, I was allowed to work as an assistant language counselor at Loyola University for six weeks with a group of Japanese and Spanish speaking adults who were learning English by means of the Counseling-Learning method. The master teachers, or language counselors, for that class were Shari Powley and Gretchen Dowling both of whom have studied extensively under Charles Curran and work as his assistants in giving Counseling-Learning workshops and demonstrations around the country. Both Ms. Powley and Ms. Dowling generously spent much time with me after the class sessions, corrected my mistakes, answered my questions and gave me much encouragement. By the end of the second week, I was allowed to be a language counselor for a third of the class which was about six students. I functioned in that role until the end of the course. The progress of the students in all of our groups was remarkable.

Subsequently, I began using the Counseling-Learning techniques once a week in the ESOL classes that I teach in secondary school. The results there,

too, were very positive. The high school students themselves gave these sessions a very high rating on a course evaluation that was given at the end of the semester.

This paper, then, is the result both of research and of personal experience with Counseling-Learning applied to the field of teaching English as a second language. The aim of this paper is threefold:

1. to briefly explain Curran's Counseling-Learning principles and methodology,

2. to present recent pedagogical support for such an approach, and

3. to show how Counseling-Learning can be integrated into a secondary school ESOL curriculum.

PART ONE: COUNSELING-LEARNING-PRINCIPLES AND METHODOLOGY

The acronym CL/CLL stands for Counseling-Learning-Community Language Learning. Counseling-Learning is a pedagogical methodology that developed out of research which was designed to study the psychological dynamics involved in adult learning. Dr. Curran, who holds a Ph.D. in Psychology, originally theorized that many of the blockings that adults exhibit in learning situations are similar to the defenses used by clients in psychotherapeutic counseling situations. To put it simply, the barriers to adult learning which Dr. Curran observed were not cognitive barriers but affective or feeling-level barriers. Curran hypothesized that teachers could deal effectively with these emotional blocks to learning by adapting a counseling modality to the educational situation.[1]

Before examining how counseling skills can apply to education, one must briefly discuss the counseling process itself. In cognitive counseling, a counselor performs very much like a good translator. The client states his problem and the counselor reflects back to the client what he said, so as to allow the client to begin to cognitively adhere to what he emotionally feels. This process of reflecting back what was said allows the client to feel understood and also to hear himself through the objectivity of another person. With the help of an understanding counselor, the client is enabled to get his situation back into focus, to view it not only affectively but cognitively as well. The efficient functioning of the personality depends upon this wholeness, in other words, healthy balance between these cognitive and affective domains is needed.[2]

Just as the "whole person" approach has proven beneficial in counseling, Curran proposes that the same techniques are helpful when applied to education. He points out that our traditional methods of education are heavily influenced by Cartesian thought.[3] Descartes' philosophy purported a separation between body and soul. Thus the intellect was seen as totally removed from somatic and emotional tones. Classroom procedures often still reflect this dichtomized view of the personality by dealing only with the cognitive development of the learner. Little attention is given to the emotional or somatic needs

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[1] Charles A. Curran, Counseling-Learning in Second Languages (Apple River, Illinois: Apple River Press, 1976), pp 19-42.

[2] Charles A. Curran, Counseling and Psychotherapy: The Pursuit of Values (New York: Sheed and Ward, Inc., 1968) pp 123-156

[3] Ibid., pp 51-73.

of the student. As Curran states:

> If, however, we look at the educative process as something experienced by a total personality, instead of viewing it with the distortions of a Cartesian intellectualism, counseling therapy skills, relationships and models may have major roles and not simply auxiliary ones.[4]

Curran chose the field of second language learning as his area of research for the application of counseling skills to education. He has been conducting this research for over ten years. The frustrations and feelings of incompetency often experienced by adult second language learners make this area particularly appropriate for experimentation. The application of counseling skills to second language learning has had excellent results. Curran explains:

> When one is in a state of strong, aggressive and even painful self-consciousness, it can seem a humiliating experience to struggle with a second language. Before adolescence, therefore, children seem to acquire the elements of a second language more easily. Consequently, the often necessary suffering in the learning of a foreign or second language during and after adolescence, can be especially eased by the gentle warmth and understanding of the language-expert-counselor. As the learner-clients grow to trust the counselor, and so believe that they will not be 'made fools of' in their ignorance, they can abandon their defenses and so constructively begin to learn.[5]

Specifically, what are the counseling techniques that are used in CL/CLL? First of all, cognitive counseling is "client-centered". The therapeutic counselor is an expert listener who can reflect back the data supplied by the client in a gentle, empathetic way. Similarly, in CL/CLL the focus of the sessions is on the student, not on the teacher. These sessions are truly "student-centered" in that all the ideas that are generated come from the students themselves. The teachers serve more as facilitators than as instructors in the traditional sense. In the early stages of the language learning process, then, the teacher functions as the understanding counselor and the learner becomes the client.[6]

Besides, the client-centered client counselor relationship , CL/CLL also makes use of group counseling dynamics. The group setting minimizes the anxieties of the learners because all the learners in the group are "in the same boat" as it were. Their shared struggles, frustrations, and successes mold the group into a supportive community; learning is no longer a competitive task but a co-operative venture engaged in by the group as a whole.[7]

Other counselors concur that there are several benefits to utilizing the power of a peer group. Dinkmeyer and Muro believe that the primary value of the group process is that it helps fulfill the psychological needs of the group members. They summarize the functions of the group process by stating:

> The group makes a unique contribution insofar as it meets certain psychological needs--to belong, to be accepted, to release negative feelings, and to participate in the

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[4] Curran, Counseling-Learning in Second Languages, p 50.

[5] Ibid., p 5.

[6] Ibid., p 3.

[7] Paul G. LaForge, Research Profiles with Community Language Learning (Apple River, Illinois: Counseling-Learning Institutes, 1975), pp 57-75.

> supportive atmosphere which encourages self-exploration. This atmosphere, in which one feels free to express his feelings, thoughts and ideas about self and others without any concern for adult censure, provides the opportunity for maximum human development.[8]

Interpersonal interaction in the group setting further emphasizes Curran's basic belief about the educational process itself: "learning is persons."[9] Curran's whole educational philosophy is deeply rooted in the "whole person" learning concept. His group methodology, therefore, is geared to the active engagement of the whole person in the learning process. The group structure accomplishes this by creating a forum in which cognitive concepts as well as negative and positive feelings can be dealt with constructively.[10] Therefore, the community learning situation concretizes the belief that:

> Learning is viewed as a unified, personal, and social experience that bestows unique and special worth on the learners. The whole person is involved in learning not simply his understanding and memory--while he is engaged in a concomitantly deep social experience that is filled with worth and meaning for him. He is no longer seen as learning in isolation and competition with others. He learns in and through them.[11]

Further rationale for the group process in Community Language Learning comes from the nature of language itself. As Yves Bégin states: "Language is a means and not an end."[12] The group situation encourages interpersonal communication; the target language is the means through which this communication takes place. Therefore, the group members focus their attention on the communication of their ideas not on the structures of the target language. This process adheres to Bégin's recommendation that:

> ...if language is to be learned efficiently and easily (as all children in the world continue to do) its instrumental of "subsidiary" nature must be taken into full account....[13]

Besides the client-counselor relationship and the use of a group structure, CL/CLL used a third counseling technique--a period of reflection or evaluation in which the students' reactions and attitudes to the learning situation are investigated. The purpose of these sessions is to facilitate learning and to do so by encouraging the verbalization of the learners' reactions to the CL/CLL process.[14] These evaluative sessions, which are an integral part of the CL/CLL method, further re-inforce the student-centeredness of the approach and the goal of "whole person" engagement in learning.

The reflective sessions may vary in format. Sometimes they consist simply of student remarks about what occurred during the group conversation session. Sometimes the conversation sessions are tape-recorded. Portions of them are

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[8] Don D. Dinkmeyer and James J. Muro, Group Counseling: Theory and Practice (Itasca, Ill., F.E. Peacock Publishers, Inc.: 1971), p 10.

[9] Jenny Rardin, "A Counseling-Learning Model for Second Language Learning," TESOL Newsletter, April, 1976. Vol. X, No. 2, p. 22.

[10] Ibid., p 21.

[11] Charles A. Curran, Counseling-Learning A Whole Person Model for Education (New York: Greene and Stratton, 1972), pp 11-12.

[12] Yves Bégin, Evaluative and Emotional Factors in Learning a Foreign Language (Montreal: Desclée and Cie, 1971), p 20.

[13] Ibid.

[14] Ibid., p 32.

played back during the reflection period. A written transcription of the recording may even be made if the students so wish.[15]

Very often in the reflection sessions, the students raise questions about language structures that were used in the conversation. At these times the language counselors assume the traditional teacher roles and supply the needed explanations. It is important to note, however, that the questions come from real communication that has taken place and that the explanations are requested by the students. In this way, rules of grammar and vocabulary become useful because of the role they play in interpersonal communication. As Curran reports:

> Somewhat as people may be surprised in the study of anatomy to discover that the skeletal structures are contained in the living people that they know and love, so our students were surprised and excited to see that grammar and vocabulary were really alive and basic to the rich, warm communications they were having with one another in the foreign language.[16]

The CL/CLL methodology is a simple one and is carried out under the following conditions. The students, who are usually in small groups of six to twelve members, sit in a closed circle. There may be one counselor per student, which is the ideal situation, or one or two counselors may work with the entire group.

The learning activity is simply that the student-clients engage in free conversation among themselves in the target language with the assistance of the language counselors. The responsibility for topics of conversation resides with the group. The only structure that is imposed on the students by the method is the circular seating arrangement and the use of counselors for help in speaking and pronunciation when needed. The content of the conversations and any changes that there might be in the routine of the sessions are determined by the students themselves.[17]

Curran has identified five stages in the process of learning a language with this method. He compares these stages with the stages of human growth from embryo to adulthood.[18] Stage One is the embryonic stage,[19] in which the clients are totally dependent upon their language counselors. At this level the students know little or nothing of the target language. Therefore, a student must first express to the language counselor in his native language whatever it is that he wants to communicate to the group. The other group members overhear what is said but they may not be actively involved in this exchange. The language counselor then reflects the client's ideas back to him in the target language. It is very important that this translation be given to the client in a warm, accepting and encouraging manner and that the

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[15] Earl Stevick, Memory, Meaning and Method: Some Psychological Perspectives on Language Learning (Rowley, MA: Newbury House Publishers, Inc., 1976), p. 129.

[16] Charles A. Curran, Counseling-Learning in Second Languages, p. 17.

[17] Earl Stevick, "Review Article" in Counseling-Learning in Second Languages by Charles A. Curran (Apple River, Illinois: Apple River Press, 1976), pp. 87-99.

[18] Ibid., p. 91-92.

[19] Ibid., p. 91.

counselor makes use of simple phrases and structures. Then the client turns to the group and expresses his ideas to them in the target language by repeating the utterances given by the language counselor. The significant point about the method at this stage is that the student is enabled from the very beginning to communicate his own ideas to the group in the target language. This is accomplished by means of a language counselor who serves as a "linguistic iron lung"[20] for the learner.

Stage Two is usually termed the "Self-assertion" stage.[21] The process is identical to that of Stage One with the exception that occasionally the clients try to express themselves directly to the group without waiting for help from the counselors. Curran refers to this as "the infant kicking in the womb and so asserting his own idependent existence."[22]

The Third Stage is referred to as the "birth stage."[23] The clients speak directly to the group in the target language without the help of the counselors. This stage marks a crucial breakthrough in the learning process. Stage Three is often a difficult stage for the counselors in that they must refrain from trying to help when their assistance is not wanted. Students often express hostility to the experts when they unconsciously try to keep the students dependent on them by giving unwanted aid.

> Like the resistance of an amputee to too much help after he has gradually acquired some facility in the use of his artificial limbs, the learner can resent language counselors who are too solicitous for him and too anxious to give him aid in those areas where he is now striving to gain independent ability.[24]

Therefore, at this phase, a counselor intervenes only when a student hesitates or turns to him for help.

In the Fourth Stage the clients speak even more freely and complexly in the target language. This is the "adolescent phase"[25] in that the learner is now secure enough in the new language to function independently. This fourth stage represents a transition in the knower-learner relationship. Prior to this stage, the language counselor created the understanding, accepting atmosphere. Now the student must demonstrate an attitude of openness and acceptance in order to encourage the counselor to communicate the further refined knowledge that he has. If this does not occur the counselor, out of fear of offending the learner, will refrain from giving further correction.

> This blocking between the knower and the learner in Stage Four helps explain how many people, such as immigrants to the United States, may remain here all their lives speaking an early Stage Four English. They receive help up to the point where they become independent and are able to speak on their own; then, however, their freedom and ease in conversation, even though it is still 'broken English,' make it extremely difficult for the knowers

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[20] Charles A. Curran, Counseling and Psychotherapy, p. 304.

[21] Charles A. Curran, Counseling-Learning A Whole Person Model for Education, p. 131.

[22] Ibid.

[23] Ibid.

[24] Ibid., p. 132.

around them to help any further. For the knower to give further knowledge may be seen as impolite, or even a rejection of the learner.[26]

However, if the student is able to assert his independence in the target language and also exhibit openness to the help of the counselor, the counselor can then intervene to correct errors without waiting to be asked to help. The client is sufficiently secure to take this correction without becoming discouraged or insulted.

In the Fifth and Final Stage, the counselor can intervene in the conversation not only to offer corrections but also to add idioms and to improve style. When the clients have reached this level, they can then in turn become counselors to students in stages one, two and three.

The delineation between the five stages is not completely distinct. Clients often shift freely from one stage to another in either direction during the course of one session. This makes it crucial for the counselors to be "in tune" with their clients and sensitive to their functioning interchangeably at the different stages.

At all five stages the conversation sessions are followed by a reflection period--the conversations themselves are never interruped for grammatical explanations. If these are needed the students will raise questions during the following period designated for such reflections. "The reflection period, therefore, seems to answer a human need to assess progress and to gain direction for both teacher and students in the course of learning."[27]

PART TWO: PEDAGOGICAL JUSTIFICATION

Recent pedagogical trends in foreign language education support both the goal and the approach of CL/CLL. The goal is obviously interpersonal communication. The approach can best be characterized by the term, humanistic. Although the word humanism is, admittedly, a generalization, two techniques that are frequently associated with humanism in education are very evident in CL/CLL. These techniques are: recognition and utilization of the role of the affective domain in the learning process, and utilization of the group process.

The CL/CLL focus on interpersonal communication is not unique. There is a shift in many language teaching methodologies to increased development of the communicative ability of second language students. The shift seems to be due to widespread dissatisfaction with the audio-lingual method. Referring to this, Edward Allen has commented that:

> ...Many students demonstrated mastery of the audio-lingual drills, but could not pass the time of day, on the simplest level, with a native speaker.[28]

A recurrent theme among critics of the audio-lingual method, is that it

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[25] Earl Stevick in Charles A. Curran, Counseling-Learning in Second Languages, p 92.

[26] Charles A. Curran, Counseling-Learning A Whole Person Model for Education, pp 133-134.

[27] LaForge, p 110.

[28] Edward Allen, "Communicative Competence" (Arlington, Va.: ERIC Document Reproduction Service, ED 104 166, 1975), p 4.

encourages very little real communication. Findley and Fasten support this idea:

> Students have actually not been stimulated to create their own unique message in a personal way, but instead have been asked to fill-in-the-blanks, repeat or modify a prepared dialogue, or substitute the name of another person, place or thing into the blank in the textbook that someone else had written.[29]

A variety of methods have been proposed to transform the language classroom into a real communication situation. Role plays and simulated dialogues have been offered as simulations of real life conversations. But Leon Jakobovits and Barbara Gordon conclude in their book, The Context of Foreign Language Teaching that:

> ...the simulated dialogue assigns inauthentic or unnatural roles to the practicing pupils... The necessary and sufficient condition for authentic conversational practice is that the pupil enact himself in the conversation.[30]

Paul La Forge, a confirmed advocate of CL/CLL, echoes this dissatisfaction with the artificiality of situational approaches to language teaching. Commenting on these techniques, La Forge remarks:

> One type of artificial dialogue is replaced with another which must be memorized in the classroom situation. Lip service is paid to the creative ability of the language learner by the hope that he will creatively transfer what he has learned from the classroom dialogues to real life situations.[31]

Chastain concurs that communicative ability is becoming increasingly important. He comments that,"...many teachers emphasize communicative skills as the most acceptable goal in language teaching."[32] In one section of his book, Chastain discusses the tenets for second-language learning that nativistic and cognitive models for first-language learning would imply. Chastain lists thirteen implications. Four of these implications are particularly illustrative of recent support for creative communication in language classes. These tenets are:

> Language usage is productive, i.e., the speaker can produce language appropriate to a given situation. (3)
>
> Communication does not require a perfected language system. (9)
>
> Language learning and language usage are creative processes. Therefore, the second-language learner should participate in the "creative construction" use of language. (12)

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[29] Charles A. Findley and Lynn A. Fasten, "Motivation, Communication, and Affect: Facilitating English Language Growth through the Use of Fantasy" (Arlington, Va.: ERIC Document Reproduction Service, ED 132 837, 1976) pp 7-8.

[30] Leon Jakobovits and Barbara Gordon, The Context of Foreign Language Teaching (Rowley, Mass.: Newbury House Publishers, Inc., 1974), pp 71-72.

[31] La Forge, p 23.

[32] Kenneth Chastain, Developing Second Language Skills: Theory to Practice (Chicago, Ill.: Rand McNally College Publishing Co., 1976), p 34.

> The teacher should concentrate on establishing natural communication situations for practice at the 'real' language level. Communicative competence cannot be acquired in a vacuum, i.e., situations devoid of meaning or meaningful purpose. (13) [33]

What is needed, then, are language teaching methodologies that will develop communicative competence in the second language learners. Although there is no one generally accepted definition of communicative competence, there does appear to be much agreement as to what it entails. Paulston and Bruder state simply: "Generally communicative competence is taken to be the objective of language teaching; the production of speakers competent to communicate in the target language."[34] Edward Allen explains the term by saying:

> Communicative competence is the ability to converse or correspond with another person in a real-life situation. The major concern for the speaker is that the listener understands his message.[35]

Finally, Sandra Savignon's definition carries a similar meaning:

> Communicative competence may be defined as the ability to function in a truly communicative setting, that is, in a spontaneous transaction involving one or more other persons. [36]

As is evident in the explanation of the CL/CLL procedure, real, personal, spontaneous and creative communication between the group members is the ultimate goal of the method. Thus CL/CLL's explicit goal of interpersonal communication in the target language is in accord with the recently acclaimed primary aim of language teaching--communicative competence.

In addition to supporting the goal of CL/CLL, current writings on second language education also support its "Whole-Person" approach. "Whole-Person" learning is synonymous with "humanistic" or "confluent" education. All three of these terms mean simply that cognition and affect are inextricably interrelated. McCoy states, for example that:

> humanistic education emphasizes a symbiotic integration of cognitive and affective learning processes: clearly, this new philosophy accepts that cognitive ability is accompanied by affective activity, that the internalization of cognitive material is essentially affective.[37]

Beverly Galyean discusses the same principle in what she terms "confluent education" when she states that "Confluence, as we use the term, means to merge feelings and thinking into one holistic learning process."[38] Chastain likewise concurs with this line of thinking. In summarizing some of the implications of psychological and sociological research for language teaching, he comments:

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[33] Ibid., pp 60-61.

[34] Christina Bratt Paulston and Mary Newton Bruder, Teaching English as a Second Language: Techniques and Procedures (Cambridge, Mass.: Winthrop Publishers, Inc., 1976), pp 55-56.

[35] Allen, p 4.

[36] Sandra Savignon, "Teaching for Communication" (Arlington, Va.: ERIC Document Reproduction Service, ED 132 841, 1975), p 3.

[37]
[38] see next page

> The affective domain is now considered to be as influential as the cognitive in determining student achievement and success in the classroom. In addition, it is increasingly apparent that the student does not learn in an isolated environment and it is undeniably obvious that the school.. must concern itself with the socialization of the student.[39]

Humanistic teaching recognizes both the role of affectivity in human behavior and the importance of socialization. The four components of humanistic teaching as enumerated by Galyean illustrate this:

1. Learning on the 'here and now' ongoing interests and energies of the class.
2. Student offered material as the basis for learning and practicing language structures.
3. Interpersonal sharing and student-to-student communication.
4. Self-awareness and self-realization.[40]

These components of humanistic teaching which promote the personal and interpersonal growth of the students are worthwhile activities in themselves, but in second language classes they yield the added benefit of increasing student use of the target language. A common criticism of second language classes is that teachers do too much of the talking. Allen comments on this weakness of teacher-centered language classes saying that:

> most of the talk in a foreign language class is done by the teacher... Seldom is there a real free exchange or expression between students.[41]

Humanistic learning environments are student-centered. Referring to student-centered language classes, Carol Puhl remarks:

> This type of classroom is more likely to release natural human impulses to communicate, foster spontaneous talk, and lead to communicative competence.[42]

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[37] Ingeborg R. McCoy, "Psycholinguistic Framework for a Humanistic Model of Foreign Language Acquisition," (Arlington, Va.: ERIC Document Reproduction Service, ED 119 529, 1975), p 3.

[38] Beverly Galyean, "Human Teaching and Human Learning in the Language Class: A Confluent Approach" (Arlington, Va.: ERIC Document Reproduction Service, ED 131 729, 1976), p 5.

[39] Chastain, p 36.

[40] Beverly Galyean, "A Confluent Design for Language Teaching", TESOL Quarterly, Vol. II, No. 2 (June, 1977), p 145.

[41] Edward Allen, "The Teacher as Catalyst; Motivation in the Classroom," in Student Motivation and the Foreign Language Teacher, ed. by Frank M. Grittner (Skokie, Ill.: National Textbook Company, 1974), p. 7.

[42] Carol Puhl, "A Practical Humanism for Developing Communicative Competence in the ESL Learner," in New Directions in Second Language Learning, Teaching and Bilingual Education, ed. by Marina K. Burt and Heidi C. Dulay (Washington, D.C.: TESOL, 1975), p 194.

Language teachers who have used small group work in their classes speak of its benefits with enthusiasm. Michael Long, for example, reports that

> not just the quantity but the quality of language commonly produced in the intimate setting of a small group of age peers is capable of greater variety than that commonly achieved in lockstep (large group) practice.[43]

Small groups promote student conversation because the relaxed atmosphere of the small group decreases student anxiety and also increases the opportunities for interpersonal transaction. McCoy views these advantages of the small group setting as built-in stimuli to elicit target language structures.

> If students are offered the chance for meaningful transactions in their Foreign Language class and given the opportunity to reduce their transactional needs, they are impelled to use linguistic structures and to learn vocabulary. Transactional motivation becomes the impetus to use whatever linguistic means the student possesses or can obtain to establish and talk about his feelings, experiences, ideas and values.[44]

Happily, then, for second language teachers, humanistic or confluent teaching approaches not only promote the personal and interpersonal growth of students, but concomitantly, they also promote the use of the target language in the classroom and stimulate the students to acquire its vocabulary and structures.

Curran's CL/CLL methodology aims at developing communicative competence in the second language learners and it does this by means of a humanistic "Whole-Person" approach. Both the goal and approach, then, of CL/CLL are strongly supported by current trends in second language pedagogy.

PART THREE: IMPLEMENTATION OF CL/CLL IN SECONDARY SCHOOL

During the last three months of the 1976-1977 school year, the CL/CLL method was used weekly on a trial basis in the ESOL classes at St. Scholastica High School, Chicago, Illinois. Student response to the method was very positive. However, incorporating CL/CLL into a secondary school curriculum does present some problems.

One evident problem that CL/CLL poses is the necessity for providing language counselors who fluently speak the first languages of the students. The problem is compounded when the ESOL class contains students from a variety of language backgrounds. At St. Scholastica, for example, one small beginning class was composed of students who spoke Chinese, Persian, Creole French, Spanish and Greek.

There are two possible ways of handling this problem. One solution is to recruit bilingual volunteers to serve as language counselors. These volunteers could be bilingual students from within the school or bilingual adults from the community at large. The difficulty with any such volunteer help is

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[43] Michael H. Long, "Group Work and Communicative Competence in the ESOL Classroom," in New Directions in Second Language Learning, Teaching and Bilingual Education, ed. by Marina K. Burt and Heidi C. Dulay (Washington, D.C.: TESOL, 1975), p 218.

[44] McCoy, p 10.

coordinating time schedules so that the students and the volunteer language counselors can get together. Scheduling the sessions can be very time consuming and frustrating and for these reasons the use of volunteers is often not feasible.

It would be ideal to be able to begin using CL/CLL at Stages One and Two but the method can be introduced at the later Stages and still be very effective. Therefore, if bilingual counselors are not available to work with the students, the use of CL/CLL can be postponed until the ESOL students have learned some of the basic vocabulary and patterns of English by means of some other language learning method.

A second problem with using CL/CLL in a secondary school is the time element. In the research groups that were conducted using this method, the suggested time allotments for the sessions were always ample--usually one to three hours per session. The daily class schedules in most secondary schools do not provide such long, uninterrupted time blocks. Teachers will have to adapt the method to the length of time of their class periods. The lack of time should not prohibit using CL/CLL. Paul La Forge, who has had much experience with the method, states encouragingly that,"...even a ten minute period can be very helpful."[45]

Time restrictions can hamper the sessions. Since the topics of conversation originate with the students, the group members may use up quite a bit of the class time just deciding what they want to talk about. Secondly, conversations can lag and there may even be a lot of silence as the students either grope for things to say or grope for the words and structures in the target language with which to express their ideas.

The only resolution to these difficulties seems to be patience on the part of the teacher and a firm resolve not to give up after a few sessions that were seemingly failures and resort to the more traditional teacher-dominated sessions. At St. Scholastica, after a few such failures at attempted conversations, the students began to really take responsibility for the sessions. Gradually they started to come to class with topics for discussion and even began to impose structure on themselves. Despite the fact that the process may be slow in starting, the results can be gratifying.

A third problem is that more aggressive students tend to dominate the discussions while the timid students say very little. In such cases the reflective sessions are invaluable. The students evaluate the conversation and their participation in it during the reflection periods. Because of these evaluations, talkative students often publicly resolve to give others more of a chance to participate, while the quiet students express a desire to be more involved. Therefore, if used correctly, the CL/CLL method has a built-in technique for coping with this problem.

A fourth problem that should be considered in incorporating CL/CLL into a secondary ESOL curriculum is that teachers must be sensitive to the various teaching modalities to which their students respond. CL/CLL is student-centered. American students, who are encouraged to be independent in many ways, often really enjoy and are challenged by the change of pace of a student-centered learning environment. However, students in ESOL classes come from many different cultural backgrounds. To expect all ESOL students to be able to adapt to a student-centered classroom when they have so many other difficult adjustments to make in a new cultural setting, may be asking too much of them.

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[45] La Forge, p 8.

The fifth and final problem connected with CL/CLL in a secondary school ESOL program is that it would be very difficult to maintain the interest of adolescents in discussion day after day, if this were the only method used. Furthermore, although reading and writing skills are used somewhat in CL/CLL, total reliance on this one method alone would not adequately meet the needs of the ESOL students who desperately need to improve their reading and writing skills in order to achieve in their other classes.

In conclusion, the benefits of the CL/CLL method are varied. They are also undeniably valuable. However, in assessing the feasibility of any teaching method the student group should be the primary concern. While the method itself is worthwhile, the teacher's judicious scrutiny of its value in a classroom must be considered. Most likely in a secondary school setting CL/CLL would be best utilized when teamed with other more conventional pedagogical techniques and methods.

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